

THE
RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL
OF THE
SEDFIELD UNION.



Annual Report

OF THE
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

FOR THE
Year Ended December 31st, 1902.



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*To the Chairman and Members of the Rural District
Council of the Sedgely Union.*

GENTLEMEN,

I have pleasure in submitting to you my Fifth Annual Report on the health and sanitary state of the Sedgely Rural District, for the year ending December 31st, 1902, and in doing so it is necessary for me to remind you that although the Durham County Asylum is part of your district, the vital statistics of the same are not dealt with in this report, as it is a separate Public Institution where patients are brought from all parts of the county, and to include it would be manifestly unfair and misleading as to the general health of your district.

POPULATION.—The estimated population of your Sanitary Districts differ from the total population of your Union (21,530) by the exclusion of Low Spennymoor (Incorporated with Spennymoor Urban District 1895) and the Durham County Asylum; and is based upon the rate of increase of the population during the decennium 1891—1901, and amounts to 19,132, to the middle of 1903.

THE MORTALITY from all causes is returned as 298, being a decrease of no less than 55 on last year's total, and 63 on the year previous to that. This pleasing decrease in the total deaths for the year I will draw further attention to when I deal with the rate of mortality per 1000 inhabitants for the year.

The total is made up of 163 males, and 135 females, at all ages. Though the deaths at all ages shew a satisfactory decrease, the same cannot be said for deaths under five years of age, which contributed no less than 146 to the same total; this, however, is an improvement upon last year's return, when more than half of the deaths were children under five years of age. The causes of this universal but deplorable state of affairs are now so well known, but the means of combating them so difficult to apply, that I fear it is likely to continue unless physical education occupies as it should an equal place with the mental one.

THE RATE OF MORTALITY is 15·5 per 1000 of the estimated population; the lowest rate which has ever been recorded in your district extending over a period of twenty-five years. This most striking fact is one upon which your Council might justly congratulate yourselves upon, were it not that there is a marked fall in the death-rate for the whole county, which last year was 19 per 1000, and this year is 16·6.

The death-rate is rightly regarded as the chief factor in arriving at an estimation of the health of any district, and if there was not some general cause at work, it would be fair to conclude that this improvement was due to better sanitation. I wish that I could attribute the marked fall from 18·6 per 1000 of last year to 15·5 of this, entirely to your efforts in that direction; but though steady progress has been made in that direction, the true explanation of this low death-rate lies in the fact of a cold wet autumn curtailing the high mortality from diarrhœa, and other conditions associated with the season.

BIRTHS registered during the year reached a total of 706, comprising 363 males and 343 females, being a decrease of 92 on the previous year's total.

The Birth-rate is 36·9 per 1000, being less than in 1901, when the same rate was 41·5 per 1000; but is slightly higher than that of the county, which is 35·6 per 1000 of the estimated population.

INFANT MORTALITY (that is deaths of children under one year of age)—shews an improvement, 104 deaths at this age being recorded, giving a death-rate per 1000 births of 147·3. Although this is the lowest rate which has been recorded in your district for the past ten years, it is still higher than that for the whole county, which this year is 139 per 1000 births; last year the respective rates for your district and the whole county were 185 and 177.

ZYMOTIC DEATH-RATE (that is the total number of deaths due to the seven principal zymotic diseases, viz.:—Small-pox, Measles, Scarlet Fever (Enteric Fever, Typhus Fever, and other doubtful forms of Continued Fever), Diphtheria, Whooping Cough and Diarrhœa).—The mortality from these causes numbered 21, comprising 2 deaths from Scarlet Fever, 5 from Whooping Cough, 1 from Enteric Fever, 3 from Measles, 3 from Diarrhœa, and 7 from Diphtheria, and gives a death-rate of 1 per 1000, being a most satisfactory decrease when compared with the same rate of last year which was 1·9 per 1000, and also with that of the county, which for this year is 1·68 per 1000. It is worthy of note, and is confirmatory of my remarks in the earlier portion of this report, that the number of deaths from diarrhœa is only 3 this year, whereas last year there were 14; and in the deaths from enteric fever, which is closely associated with the same causes which produce diarrhœa, only 1 death is recorded in contrast to 8 of last year.

THE NUMBER OF NOTIFICATIONS received continue steadily to increase, the totals for the past three years being:—1899, 242; 1900, 305; 1901, 399; and for this year, 421 cases. As in previous years, Scarlet Fever heads the list with 310 cases; Erysipelas, 58; Continued Fever, 20; Diphtheria, 15; Enteric Fever, 13; Puerperal Fever, 2; Membranous Croup, 2; Relapsing Fever, 1.

The most striking comment to be made upon this large total is that, although the number of notifications have steadily increased, the deaths from these causes have steadily decreased; only 2 deaths occurred from scarlet fever, 1 from enteric fever and erysipelas, and 7 from diphtheria.

SCARLET FEVER has been, as in previous years, very prevalent, an increase of 123 cases upon last year's total having to be recorded. The majority of the cases were of a most mild description, so much so that the sufferers, if we may so call them, were quite unaware there was or had been anything the matter with them until some peeling of skin from the hands revealed the nature of the disorder. The difficulty of combating so slight a disorder as this disease has now, in the majority of instances, become very great, because isolation in small cottage homes is practically impossible, and it is only when you get your isolation hospital completed and into working order, that anything effectual can be looked for in the diminution of these cases. The following table shows the distribution of the disease in the various townships:—

Trimdon	...	...	141	cases
Cornforth	...	...	98	„
Ferryhill	...	...	52	„
Sedgefield	...	...	18	„
Bishopton	...	...	1	„
Total			310	„

DIPHTHERIA AND MEMBRANOUS CROUP, which have been prevalent throughout the county, shews an increase of 7 cases compared with the return for last year, 15 cases being recorded, with 7 deaths. Of these cases 6 occurred in the Trimdon township, 6 in the Sedgefield township, 2 at Cornforth, and 1 at Foxton.

The outbreak at Mordan in the first instance was distinctly traced to drinking badly contaminated water from a shallow surface well, which was immediately and permanently closed. The remainder of the cases here, and three out of the six at Sedgefield, were conveyed by contagion or personal infection. A strong endeavour was made to get the cases removed to an isolation hospital, but no accommodation could be obtained, and considering the wilful manner in which infection was courted at Mordan, had it not been for almost hourly supervision the outbreak would have been much worse.

I would recommend that your Council supply anti-toxin free of charge to medical practitioners throughout your district who may have any of these cases, as this precaution has been found most beneficial by the Councils who have adopted the same.

ENTERIC OR TYPHOID FEVER shews a most satisfactory decline in the number of cases recorded, only 13 having been returned, with 1 death, whereas last year there were 69 cases and 8 deaths.

The distribution of the cases were as follows:— 6 occurred in the Trimdon township, 4 in the Cornforth township, and 3 cases at the Durham County Asylum, so that more than half of your district enjoyed, as it has not done for years, an immunity from this disease.

In my last annual report, when I had to draw your attention to the large number of these cases, I attributed the cause then to a drouthy season with heavy thunder showers acting upon the insanitary conditions prevailing in the townships of Trimdon and Cornforth, and it would seem confirmatory of this opinion when the cold wet autumn of the past year is remembered, and as the conditions then reported upon practically remain the same, it only requires a similar climatic condition to prevail to bring about a like incidence of the disease. I would, therefore, draw no false security from the marked decline in the number of these cases this year, for against climatic conditions you can do nothing, but by improving the sanitary conditions, as mentioned in my last annual report, you may do much.

CONTINUED FEVER, it is pleasing to record, shews a marked decline in the number of notifications received, only 20 having been received as against 96 last year; 18 out of the 20 cases occurred in the Trimdon township, and the remainder in the Cornforth township. There were no deaths recorded from this disease, nor have there been for the past five years.

MEASLES have not been unduly prevalent in any part of your district. An outbreak occurred at Cornforth, and owing to the courtesy of Dr. Hepburn, who kindly acquainted me of the same at an early date, so that by closing the schools for a period of three weeks, a further trouble was avoided.

WHOOPIING COUGH.—This distressing complaint has shewn itself in most parts of your district, but has never been at any time epidemic. Five deaths, exactly the same number as last year, were recorded from it, one each at Sedgfield and Bishopton, and three at Ferryhill.

ERYSIPELAS shews an increase of 19 upon the number of notifications received last year, 58 in all having been received. Cornforth, as in past years, has the greatest number of cases, 30 being notified from that township, 11 each from Ferryhill and Trimdon, 4 from Sedgefield, and 1 each from Bishopton and the Durham County Asylum.

INFLUENZA.—This disease, while never markedly present in the district, has shown itself at intervals, one death only having been attributed to it.

PHTHISIS PULMONALIS.—The deaths from this disease, it is most satisfactory to have to again record, shew a decrease, only 11 having occurred, the number for the past three years being 1900, 19 ; 1901, 13 ; 1902, 11 ; the death-rate for this year being 0·57, and for the county 1·06 ; the same rate last year was respectively ·68 and 1·11 per 1000.

RESPIRATORY DISEASES.—The deaths from these causes numbered 45, and the death-rate for the same 2·3, being slightly lower than last year, when it was 2·7 per 1000.

INJURIES accounted for 9 deaths, which were fairly evenly distributed throughout the district, 2 occurring in the Sedgefield township, 1 at Bishopton, 2 at Ferryhill, 1 at Cornforth, and 3 at Trimdon.

THE GENERAL SANITATION of your district shews some improvement ; 1792 nuisances were abated, being an increase of 161 upon last year's total, and now that there is an additional inspector further improvement should result, but Urban powers are urgently needed to enable you to have more power over building operations than are provided for in your present bye-laws, and to deal with the paving and making of new streets in the townships of Trimdon and Cornforth.

SCAVENGING.—This most important matter, the very foundation of sanitary progress, I regret to say has been very indifferently performed, having been a constant cause of complaint throughout the year, and I would urge your Council to more strictly enforce your power over the contractors, so that the work is more efficiently done, or take the work into your own hands, which I am of the opinion is the only real practical and economical solution of the difficulty.

FACTORY AND WORKSHOPS ACT, 1901.—In accordance with the new duties involved by this Act, the various factories, workshops and workplaces have been visited by myself, and with two exceptions were found satisfactory: these exceptions, which consisted of insufficient ventilation in one instance, and inadequate privy accommodation, were being remedied at the date of my visit, and are now completed.

NUMBER OF HOUSES ERECTED AND RE-CONSTRUCTED.

Township.	Erected.	Re-constructed.
Cornforth ...	38	—
Ferryhill ...	9	3
Chilton ...	9	—
Trimdon ...	41	39
Bishop Middleham	1	—
Sedgefield ...	—	2
Bradbury ...	—	2
Woodham ...	—	1
Fishburn ...	—	2
Total Statutory Notices served ...	...	36
Total Nuisance abated ...	...	1792
No. of Houses dealt with under Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890 ...	...	40

COMMON LODGING-HOUSES.—There are only two now in the district, one at Sedgfield, and one at Cornforth; the third one, which used to be at Ferryhill, having been abandoned. They have been most excellently conducted, the average number of lodgers weekly amounting to 110.

WATER SUPPLY.—Considerable improvement has been made in this direction by the extension of the Weardale and Shildon Company's water mains, and the adoption of interior house fittings. There has nothing, however, been done in the proposed Trimdon improvements, further than that now definite arrangements have been made for the work to be completed within three months.

Five samples of suspicious water were taken, of which two were found unfit for human consumption, and the sources condemned.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES HOSPITAL.—Your Council is to be congratulated upon the excellent plans you have adopted for the erection of the same, and now that tenders are being asked for, there is nothing to delay its completion.

COWSHEDS AND DAIRIES.—These have been fairly well kept during the year, and no disease has been suspected or traced to any milk supply.

SEWERAGE WORKS.—These have been receiving improved attention; during the year the greater part of the irrigation areas have been thoroughly trenched, with much improved results in the various effluents.

A considerable portion of the outfall works at Sedgefield have been completed, whilst the remainder are intended to be finished in a few months, each section of the works being proceeded with consecutively. In other parts of the district small extensions of sewers have been laid down, the whole making a gross total of approximately 1200 yards.

In conclusion, I wish to tender my thanks to all the medical gentlemen practising in your district, to the County Medical Officer, and to your Inspector, for their courteous assistance rendered me in the execution of my duties.

I am, Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

FREDERICK HUNTON, M.D.,

Medical Officer of Health.

SEDGEFIELD,

February, 1903.

TABLE OF DEATHS during the Years 1878 to 1902 inclusive, in the Rural Sanitary District of Sedgefield.

YEAR	Estimated Population	BIRTHS			DEATHS			Mortality from all causes at subjoined ages						Deaths from Zymotic Diseases																Deaths from other Diseases					Rate per 1000 of Population						
		M	F	Tot l	M	F	Total	Under 1 year	1-5	5-15	15-25	25-65	65 and up'rds	Small Pox	Scarlatina	Diphtheria	Croup	Typhus	Enteric	Continued	Relapsing	Puerperal	Cholera	Erysipelas	Measles	Whooping Cough	Diarrhoea and Dysentery	Rheumatic Fever	Influenza	Total Zymotic Diseases	Phthisis Pulmonalis	Bronchitis Pleurisy Pneumonia	Heart Disease	Injuries	All other Diseases	Birth rate	Death rate	Infant Mortality per 1000 births	Zymotic rate	Phthisis rate	Bronchitis Pleurisy Pneumonia rate
1878	15660	410	412	822	178	177	355	108	93	16	20	58	23	...	28	20	2	5	8	15	1	...	80	23	41	10	14	187	52.6	22.7	131	5.1	1.4	2.6
1879	15882	341	295	636	132	136	268	84	28	15	18	43	31	...	9	1	3	...	4	2	4	1	...	24	23	34	17	11	159	40.1	16.2	132	1.5	1.4	2.1
1880	16104	318	247	565	168	145	313	108	65	21	23	50	20	...	2	...	5	...	7	8	...	1	14	12	13	62	28	51	17	8	147	35.0	19.4	191	3.8	1.6	3.1
1881	16326	310	357	667	143	159	302	92	40	18	25	66	25	...	17	1	4	...	4	3	...	2	10	12	53	34	36	15	12	152	43.3	18.7	137	3.2	2.1	2.2
1882	16332	320	315	635	226	153	379	97	51	29	50	85	30	...	12	4	1	3	2	13	21	1	...	59	29	34	18	84*	156	38.8	23.2	152	3.6	1.7	2.0
1883	16534	349	333	682	197	179	376	116	66	36	27	60	32	5	7	1	2	...	5	3	1	16	5	8	1	...	54	27	64	23	21	187	41.2	22.7	169	3.2	1.6	3.8
1884	16836	360	327	687	182	136	318	105	47	26	15	67	21	14	1	2	5	...	5	3	15	5	19	1	...	71	31	38	23	15	140	41.3	18.8	152	4.2	1.8	2.3
1885	17038	337	336	673	162	158	316	129	47	18	22	39	25	2	8	...	1	...	5	1	7	9	1	34	32	57	17	4	176	39.4	18.7	191	1.9	1.7	3.3
1886	17238	340	369	709	158	161	319	108	68	20	19	42	23	...	6	1	3	...	2	1	3	13	8	3	...	40	27	56	15	9	172	46.3	18.5	152	2.3	1.5	2.3
1887	17440	342	327	669	176	167	343	121	65	15	20	64	24	...	7	...	4	...	3	1	1	14	6	9	45	30	63	25	12	168	38.4	19.6	180	1.7	2.5	3.6
1888	17642	344	357	701	164	141	305	94	47	24	15	60	30	...	10	5	4	...	6	2	2	1	...	30	28	40	17	12	178	39.7	17.3	134	1.5	1.7	2.2
1889	17844	336	325	661	163	163	326	102	56	26	19	54	28	...	15	12	1	...	2	3	7	40	24	52	15	13	173	37.0	18.0	154	1.3	2.2	2.9
1890	18046	348	354	692	189	176	365	114	72	18	12	73	27	...	7	...	4	...	1	6	...	1	11	15	10	..	4	55	24	69	18	8	187	38.4	20.2	164	3.0	1.3	3.8
1891	18246	399	372	771	205	181	386	128	35	13	26	75	35	...	2	...	4	...	5	2	..	4	1	...	5	...	16	23	28	105	24	9	181	42.3	21.1	166	1.2	1.5	5.7
1892	18431	382	363	745	206	156	363	115	69	22	11	66	31	1	4	3	2	...	3	1	...	3	...	1	14	6	7	...	1	45	29	65	13	8	202	40.3	19.0	154	2.4	1.0	3.5
1893	18640	375	342	717	189	185	374	136	60	20	24	64	27	...	3	6	11	5	5	5	28	1	1	64	29	46	14	12	208	38.3	20.6	189	3.4	1.5	2.5
1894	18849	376	342	718	192	134	326	122	51	13	16	47	27	1	6	2	16	13	3	...	4	41	25	40	24	8	184	38.0	17.0	169	2.1	1.3	2.1
1895†	18223	378	360	738	197	177	374	147	57	13	20	60	28	...	6	4	1	...	1	2	10	16	2	10	52	22	53	25	13	209	40.0	20.5	191	2.3	1.2	2.9
1896	18432	355	385	740	178	167	345	125	60	7	16	70	22	4	...	6	1	...	1	...	1	17	7	7	...	1	45	19	52	25	10	194	40.0	18.7	168	2.3	1.0	2.8
1897	18641	387	344	731	147	166	313	110	27	7	32	66	23	...	6	1	9	3	...	1	...	1	2	3	8	3	4	41	23	36	27	9	178	39.3	16.7	150	2.1	1.2	1.9
1898	18860	348	356	704	178	164	342	118	53	14	17	65	25	...	8	2	3	...	8	1	...	2	...	7	13	1	4	48	18	45	23	11	197	37.4	18.1	153.4	2.2	0.9	2.3
1899	19079	385	382	767	170	163	333	119	42	15	20	77	16	...	4	1	3	10	5	11	1	4	34	21	42	17	12	202	40.2	17.4	156.2	1.7	1.1	2.2
1900	19288	370	376	746	191	170	361	128	69	15	27	87	35	...	6	1	1	...	6	8	4	13	...	5	38	19	53	26	11	170	38.6	18.6	158.1	1.97	0.93	2.85
1901	18927	413	385	791	190	163	353	148	40	14	15	73	63	...	6	4	8	1	...	5	14	37	13	46	19	15	171	41.5	18.6	185.4	1.9	0.68	2.4
1902	19132	363	343	706	163	135	298	104	42	11	5	81	55	...	2	7	1	1	3	5	3	...	1	21	11	45	22	9	122	36.9	15.5	147.3	1.0	0.57	2.3

† Incorporation of Low Spennymoor with the Spennymoor Urban District, with an area of 232 acres, and a population of 1044.

* Explosion of "fire damp" at Trimdon Grange Colliery, 68 killed.

